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Backgrounder: social development







# background

## Social Development

### ◆ HEALTH AND SOCIAL INDICATORS

#### PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

**Life Expectancy:** The gap in life expectancy between First Nations and other Canadians is seven years. In 1990, the life expectancy of First Nations men was 66.9 years, and for women, 74 years (compared to 74.6 and 80.9 years for all Canadians). Life expectancy is lowest for Registered Indians living on reserves: 62 years for men and 69.6 years for women. (Source: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP))

**Suicide** rates of Registered Indian youth (ages 15 to 24) are eight times higher than the national rate for females and five times higher for males. (Source: Medical Services Branch (MSB), Health Canada)

**The birth rate** of Registered Indians is twice the Canadian average: 27 births per 1,000 people in the population compared to 13 for Canada as a whole.

**Infant mortality rates** fell from 28 to 11 per 1,000 live births between 1979 and 1993. The national rate fell from 11 to 6 in the same period.

Other health indicators for First Nations people:

- 6.6 times greater incidence of tuberculosis
- 3 times as likely to be diabetic
- 2 times as likely to report a long-term disability

(Source: MSB, Health Canada)

**Disabilities:** Aboriginal people are more likely than other Canadians to have hearing, sight and speech disabilities. Mobility impairment occurs at the same rate for both populations. (Source: Statistics Canada, 1994)

**Addictions & Solvent abuse:** 62% of First Nations people aged 15 and over perceive alcohol abuse as a problem in their community, while 48% state that drug abuse is an issue. (Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), Statistics Canada, 1991) Solvent abuse by youth is a particular concern: 22% of First Nations youth who report solvent abuse are chronic users and come from homes where there is financial hardship, neglect, family conflict or child abuse. (Source: Health Canada)

**AIDS/HIV** reporting is increasing for the Aboriginal population, whereas reporting in the mainstream is levelling off. The proportion of AIDS cases in Canada reported by Aboriginal peoples has risen from 1.4% (1984-1990), to 2.4% (1990-92), to 4.4% (1993-95).

#### FAMILY AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

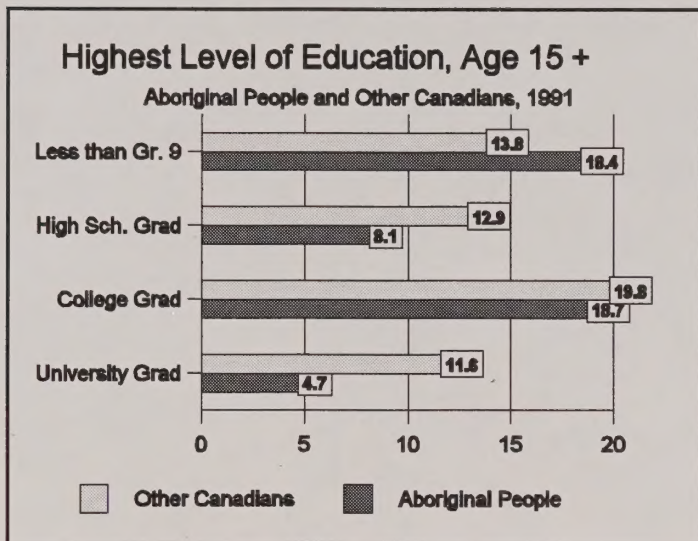
☐ **Healthy Connections:** 92% of First Nations people aged 15 and over reported that they had someone to call on for help; 54% of First Nations people aged 15 and over reported being involved in some form of physical activity and social sport; 51% of First Nations people aged 15 and over reported that they participate in traditional Aboriginal activities. (Source: APS, Statistics Canada, 1991)







- ❑ **Children in Care:** 4% of First Nations children were in the custody of Child and Family Service (CFS) agencies in 1996/97. (Source: Basic Departmental Data 97 (BDD97), Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), unpublished)
- ❑ **Social problems:** 39% of Aboriginal adults reported that family violence is a problem in their community; 25% reported sexual abuse and 15% reported rape as problems. More Inuit report these to be problems in their community (44%, 35% and 25%, respectively). (Source: APS, Statistics Canada, 1991)
- ❑ **Incarceration rates** of Aboriginal people are 5-6 times higher than the national average. (Source: Sol Gen, 1995) The highest rates of Aboriginal sentenced admissions are in the NWT (80%), the prairies (50%) and BC (20%). (Source: Sol Gen) In some age categories, for example, youth aged 12-18 in Alberta, Aboriginal offenders are projected to account for 40 % of the admissions. (Source: RCAP)



- ❑ **Urban crime rates** for Aboriginal people are 4½ times higher than the non-Aboriginal rate in Calgary and 12 times the non-Aboriginal rates in Regina and Saskatoon.

## EDUCATION, INCOME & WELL-BEING

**Education** of Aboriginal people lags behind other Canadians, although it has improved. In 1991, 18% of Aboriginal people (15 years or older) had less than grade 9, compared to 37% in 1981. In 1996-97, there were 112,060 students enrolled in kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools. The percentage of students remaining in school to Grade 12 increased to 71% in 1996-97 from just 31% in 1981-82. (Source: 1991 Census & BDD97)

In 1996-97, there were an estimated 27,487 students enrolled in post-secondary education, up from 5,467 in 1981. In 1995-96, there were 3,929 graduates.

**Poverty:** Most Aboriginal people are at or below the poverty line. In major western cities, four times as many Aboriginal people as other citizens are below the poverty line.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- ❑ **Housing:** The total number of housing units on reserves has increased from 60,509 in 1989-90 to 80,443 in 1996-97. Over the same period, the number of adequate units has gone up from 24,659 (40.8%) to 41,885 (52.1%). Fifteen years ago, one-third of houses on reserves were overcrowded compared to about 20% today. (Source: BDD97 & 1991 Census)
- ❑ **Water and Sewer:** In 1977-78, only 53% of houses had adequate water supplies and 47% had adequate sewage disposal. In 1996-97, this increased to 96% and 92% respectively. (Source: BDD97)



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